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SUBJECT: SUCRE SOCIAL SUMMIT - MORE BOMBAST THAN TURNOUT

REF: LA PAZ 2488

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Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) Pro-government groups held their planned "Social Summit" on September 10 in Sucre to rally support for the embattled Constituent Assembly, but the gathering was a failure given that only twelve percent of the expected 100,000 people attended. Despite fiery speeches where participants swore to defend the Constituent Assembly to the death, very little violence ensued. There was much rhetorical trashing of the groups, traditional opponents, but the media also received a lot of criticism; one speaker called for the media's "nationalization." The ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) and main opposition party PODEMOS continue to call for national dialogue regarding the new constitution, but neither appears to want to listen to other. If the discourse from the Social Summit is an indicator of what the MAS leadership is thinking, there will almost certainly be violence in the next few months between pro- and anti-government forces. End Summary.

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The Big Summit that Wasn't  
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¶2. (SBU) Starting at 9:30 AM, the Social Summit consisted of five hours of fiery speeches. Pro-government (indigenous, labor, and coca grower) estimated at approximately 12,000 people attended the rally. Summit organizers had stated that the rally would draw 100,000 people. The event was generally peaceful with no serious injuries or gross acts of violence, although the radical indigenous group the "Ponchos Rojos" (Red Ponchos) did throw firecrackers at Sucre Mayor Aydee Navaa's house.

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The Media in the Cross-Hairs  
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¶3. (SBU) While the "media luna" (the lowland eastern departments who largely oppose the government), the Santa Cruz Civic Committee and the so called "oligarchs" received

their expected bashing, the media was also a frequent target of rhetorical attack. Constituent Assembly President Silvia Lazarte stated that the media purposefully misinforms the people. Adolfo Chavez, of the indigenous group CIDOB, stated "When are they (the media) going to tell us the truth?" The most radical anti-press statement came from Roberto Quispe, leader of the Red Ponchos, who called for the "nationalization" of the media.

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The Declaration  
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¶4. (SBU) Summit organizers issued a ten part declaration at the rally's conclusion. Below is a paraphrased summary of the resolutions.

Participants resolved to:

- 1 ) Defend the Constituent Assembly with their lives.
- 2 ) Push for moving the Constituent Assembly's working sessions to another site if Sucre cannot assure the safety of assembly delegates.
- 3 ) Support for Constituent Assembly President Silvia Lazarte.
- 4 - Reject the court's decision to overturn the MAS-led resolution to exclude debate over restoring Sucre as the country's full capital.
- 5 ) Demand that assembly members not receive their salaries and per diem during the assembly's one month recess.
- 6 ) Defend President Evo Morales' "process of change."
- 7 ) Demand that the opening of congress and the president's annual report occur in a different department each year on a rotating basis.
- 8 ) Denounce before the international community and human rights groups the aggressions and insults they have received (by opposition groups).
- 9 ) Warn the "small groups of fascists" (code for the media) to stop misinforming the public.
- 10 ) Declare themselves in a state of emergency to defend the Constituent Assembly.

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Opposition Opposes Extension  
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¶5. (SBU) While Constituent Assembly President Silvia Lazarte called for a one-month recess on September 7 to reduce tensions and avoid conflict, the prospects for a new constitution increasingly look bleak. With the Constituent Assembly's one-month recess to last until October 8, the assembly will have little more than two months to finish drafting a new constitution. PODEMOS and National Unity (UN), the main opposition parties in the assembly and congress, have stated they will not approve another extension of the Constituent Assembly, yet all parties agree the December 14 deadline will almost certainly not be met. MAS Senator Antonio Peredo also indicated that the his party may not favor an extension, stating that "this is the final phase" of the Constituent Assembly.

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The Government Opposes Sucre  
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¶6. (SBU) While President Morales' government continues to state it remains impartial on the issue of restoring Sucre to full capital status and that it does not interfere in the workings of the Constituent Assembly, declarations by senior

government officials indicate otherwise. Government spokesperson Alex Contreras stated on September 10, "The issue of the capital cannot be touched in the Constituent Assembly." The government has also encouraged Silvia Lazarte and other MAS delegates to disregard the courts. Contreras stated, "We think that the Constituent Assembly should not obey this resolution . . ." Contreras was referring to the Chuquisaca Superior Court's decision stating that Sucre's status should not be excluded as an item of debate before the Constituent Assembly.

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Comment  
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17. (SBU) Beyond rallying it's already pro-MAS base, the summit organizers must be disappointed by the poor turnout. They have correctly identified that their new constitution, which would enshrine their political vision, is in peril. The opposition now sees the very real possibility of the Constituent Assembly failing. Both sides will exploit the one-month recess to strengthen their bases. While MAS and PODEMOS still call for national dialogue regarding the new constitution, the discourse from the Social Summit indicates that MAS supporters are looking for confrontation more than negotiation. End Comment.  
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